

Israeli forces kill six in new attack on Gaza aid seekers in what is described as death trap

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Members of the Palestinian Civil Defense extinguish a burning car following Israeli bombardment in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on March 13, 2024. (Photo by AFP)

Gaza City, March 14 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have shot dead at least six Palestinians and wounded 83 in Gaza City as they were waiting for food and humanitarian supplies at the Kuwait Roundabout, an area where large groups of people gather for arriving aid trucks.

The attack on Thursday took place hours after at least five people were killed by an Israeli air strike on a food distribution centre in Rafah, southern Gaza, run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is the main humanitarian agency in Gaza.

There has been an uptick in fatal assaults by Israeli troops on crowds of starving civilians lining up for aid in recent weeks. On Monday night, Israeli forces killed 11 people waiting for food aid at the same roundabout.

Reporting from Rafah, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said seeking aid has become "really dangerous" in the enclave, adding that "the Kuwaiti Roundabout is now known as a death trap". "We heard from a hungry and largely traumatised population stranded in the Gaza Strip asking what is the purpose of getting those aid trucks into Gaza and its northern area if they're getting shot at," he said.

"[The Israeli aggression] also endangers the work of aid workers on the ground," he added.

The Kuwait Roundabout is between the central area of the Gaza Strip and Gaza City, linking northern Gaza to the south.

At least 400 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks on aid deliveries.

Sami Abu Salim, an UNRWA employee, told Al Jazeera that he felt frustrated over the attack as the employees of the aid centre and warehouse in the eastern part of Rafah have been working around the clock to provide aid to displaced Palestinians. "This [attacking an aid centre] is forbidden. We are an international institution," Abu Salim said. "We take all of this [aid] to the elderly and the children."

The facility in Rafah is one of the last operating food distribution centres in Gaza, and the UNRWA is calling for an independent inquiry into repeated Israeli attacks on the UN agency.

The UNRWA spokeswoman Juliette Touma told Al Jazeera on Thursday that the Israeli strike caused minimal damage to the supplies, adding that the agency was still distributing aid from the facility after the raid, which killed one of its workers and injured 22 others.

UN facilities must be protected at all times as mandated by international law, Touma stressed. "Too many times in this war have our facilities and personnel become a target," she added. At least 165 staff of the UNRWA have been killed in Gaza since October 7 and more than 150 facilities hit, according to the agency.

Touma said the UNRWA shares the coordinates of its facilities and activities every day with all warring parties, including Israel, and that the location of the Rafah warehouse had been included in a list shared a day before it was attacked.

Rights groups say that Israel is using starvation as a weapon of war against Palestinians. Agnes Callamard, the secretary-general of Amnesty International, slammed the global community for pretending the crisis in Gaza was of a humanitarian nature and not one engineered by Israel.

"While the international community is busy pretending Gaza is a humanitarian crisis, Israel continues to violate international law in total impunity," she said in a post on X, referencing Israel's attack on the UN food centre in Rafah.

"Humanitarian assistance air drop and a Gaza aid port won't address these violations. And they won't address engineered starvation," she added.

The UNRWA has said Israeli authorities have not allowed it to deliver supplies to the north of the Strip since January 23. Israel, which controls Gaza's border crossings, has opened just one entry point into the enclave since the start of the war and imposed "endless checking procedures" for trucks to pass through, UN agencies say.

Since February 9, the average number of trucks that entered Gaza daily was about 55, compared with 500 that used to enter before the start of the conflict, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The UN has said at least half a million, or one in four people in Gaza, face famine as it highlighted the problem of getting desperately needed humanitarian relief into Gaza amid Israeli restrictions.

A new report by humanitarian group Refugees International said that Israel has generated "famine-like conditions" in the Gaza Strip. The group's research in Egypt, Jordan and Israel revealed that Tel Aviv "consistently and groundlessly impeded aid operations within Gaza, blocked legitimate relief operations and resisted implementing measures that would genuinely enhance the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza".

The Ministry of Health in Gaza reported on Thursday that at least 31,341 Palestinians have been killed and 73,134 wounded by Israeli attacks since October 7th. In the past 24 hours, Israeli attacks have killed 69 Palestinians in Gaza, the ministry said.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/349660-israeli-forces-kill-six-in-new-attack-on-gaza-aid-seekers-in-what-is-described-as-death-trap>



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